4: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FL.11 Loo FL.11



village is a long way off the girl's relations sleep at his village, but if they can 585
manage to do so they return the same day. Next day the bridegroom's brothers and his other wives take the bride back to her father's village and there is a great feast and much drink; the bridegroom does not go.

The father of the girl next day presents his daughter with a goat and she 583
returns to her husband. The girl's husband then continues to make payments to 585
his father-in-law; the total amount it is necessary to pay varies from two to six cows; if he stops paying his wife will go off to her father's village and stay there for a month or so until the man resumes payments. Before the big attack of cattle plague in 1890 and 1891 it is said that as many as forty cows were sometimes paid for a wife.

If a woman does not bear her husband a child quickly the husband stops his 583
payments, but the husband has no claim for the return of any of the property as 587
long as the woman stays with him. If a wife dies and has borne no children the property is returned, or one of her sisters is given the man to wife and the man only pays about twenty goats for the sister.

If a woman will not stay with her husband she is married to some 586
one else, and the first husband is repaid from what the second husband pays. If a woman has a child and is ill-treated she can leave her husband but the child belongs to him; if the child be a boy, when it grows up and the mother grows old she will generally come back to live with her son. If 583
after a marriage has been arranged a father is loth to part with his daughter the young man employs his friends to waylay the girl in the daytime. If the girl however refuses to stay at her suitor's village and runs away, the property paid over is returned without delay and the match is broken off. If a woman remains unmarried for a longer period than usual she often goes off to a chief or someone with plenty of cattle and states that she intends to [622
stay there and work for him; in such a case she is usually taken to wife, but the 919]
man pays much less than is nominally customary. Chiefs have from ten to forty wives. They are generally speaking very moral in their domestic relations. [582]
They do not intermarry in the same clan, but a man will marry the daughter of a man named the same as himself.

*Pottery.*—All pottery is made by women and is similar to that of the Bantu 323
Kavirondo, and consists of water pots, cooking pots, trade pots, etc.

*Dyes; tanning.*—These people do not use dyes, neither do they tan, but they 281
soften skins by rubbing in fat and hand-working till soft. 284

*Arms, etc.*—Their shields were formerly made of buffalo hide but are now 491
made of cow hide; the shields are usually very large, curving round the body of the man carrying it. They also make shields of sudanich wood (called *Orindi*). They have a great fancy for spears with shafts of enormous length, ten feet or more; the heads are very small and insignificant. Use clubs and clubs to a small extent; the former weapons are however I think copied from the Masai or Nandi. Also use bows and arrows; the arrows were formerly poisoned, but

S: Hobley G-S (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11
Nandi FL13
Bantu Kavirondo FL4



B
553

of the baby, if a boy, and round its left wrist, if a girl. Next morning, the body and head of the quail are cut off, leaving the lower half of the beak of the bird suspended by the string round the child's neck; everyone then knows that it has been named.

Names are often suggested by some event happening at the time.

Mumia was born on the day of an attack by the Wanga or Elgumi people, and was thus named Mumia. Formerly, again, when Europeans were great curiosities in the country, if a child was born on the day a caravan camped at the village, it would often be named after the leader of it, if he chanced to be well known, thus "Jakinia," "Martinia," and "Oldie"[1] are very common.

### Tattooing and Tribal Marks.

L
304
[843]

These rarely appear to have any special significance, but, among the Ja-Luo people, it is thought that a woman will not bear children unless she is tattooed.

All Kisumu girls are tattooed just below the navel (Fig. 8). When, however, a woman first becomes pregnant, more elaborate tattooings are added in front as far up as the breasts, and a belt of markings is carried right round the waist. All the men are not marked, it is quite a matter of choice with them. For instance, the head chief of the Kisumu people is not tattooed.

Fig. 8.

The various tribes of the Ja-Luo have slightly differing tattoo marks.

B
304
[833]

Among the Kotuh, if a warrior kills an enemy in warfare, on his return he has two rows of round marks tattooed on his right chest and continued upwards over his right shoulder; moreover, upon reaching home, it is considered essential that he should have connection with his wife as soon as convenient; this is believed to prevent the spirit of his dead enemy from haunting and bewitching him.

The Turkana and Suk tattoo rows of spots from the chest over the shoulder, but whether this is significant of the warrior having killed an enemy or not, is not known.

An examination of the Kotuh language affords reasons for believing that there is a strain of Kavirondo or Turkana blood among them, and this peculiar tattooing custom may be additional evidence of the affinity.

The Kotuh women have a number of raised dots tattooed on their stomachs and abdomen arranged regularly in close board fashion. An irritant is rubbed into the cuts to produce weals.

L
B
N

### Numerical Proportion of Sexes.

162
515

In a previous publication[2] I ventured the opinion that the female sex greatly outnumbered the male. My observation was based upon the prevalence of

[1] The native version of the names Jackson, Martin and Hobley.
[2] *Loc. cit.*, p. 19

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11
Nandi FL13
Bantu Kavirondo FL4



L B N 162 595

polygamy, and the deceptive fact that the village headmen and elders generally have large numbers of wives. Though still of opinion that the female sex predominate, their numerical superiority is probably not so great as I thought at first, and having had my attention called from time to time to the large number of unmarried adults in many of the villages, I have collected statistics on the subject.

L B N 163

The summary of these statistics is as follows:—

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bantu Kavirondo | male births | ... | 57½ | per cent. |
| | female " | ... | 42½ | " |
| Nilotic stock: Ja-Luo | male " | ... | 42 | " |
| | female " | ... | 58 | " |
| Nilotic stock: Nandi | male " | ... | 48½ | " |
| | female " | ... | 51½ | " |

It thus appears that among the Bantu tribes the number of male births is in excess, and among those of Nilotic origin, particularly among the Nilotic Kavirondo, the female births are in excess.

L B N 162

The statistics also show the average number of children in a family among the various races.

| | | Average Number of Children. |
|---|---|---|
| Bantu Kavirondo | ... ... | 7·75 |
| Nilotic stock: Ja-Luo | ... ... ... | 10·6 |
| Nilotic stock: Nandi | ... ... ... | 2·6 |

Of course in times past the wastage of male life was extremely heavy, and in spite of the more peaceful times now prevailing, still is so.

In connection with this subject I may mention that as the country settles, and the male sex obtains a better chance of survival, I am hoping that the custom of marriage by purchase, which entirely prevails in this area, will prove an incentive to the younger male population to turn their attention more to the habit of working steadily for hire, in order to obtain the wherewithal to buy their wives, and I hope I am not too sanguine in making the statement that I fancy signs of this movement are becoming apparent.

large quantity of beer, even as much as nine or ten pots full, and when the girl returned to her husband's *dala*, not only this beer, but also a goat or a sheep, or perhaps a large quantity of fish was sent with her as a present for her husband's parents. 585

On her return a ceremony known as the *reyus dipo* took place. It was also known as the *wen dipo*. *Reyus* is the name of a plant, and it is also the name for a broom or brush. *Dipo* is the open space in the middle of the *dala*. *Wen* means the stomach contents of an animal. All these elements enter into the ceremony, which consisted of the following events. The father-in-law killed a bull and one of the front legs provided a feast for the family; the hindquarters and the other front leg were set aside to dry, but the stomach contents were strewn over the *dipo* and left there until the evening. Meanwhile the father-in-law made a brush of *reyus* which he gave to the girl, and with this broom at dusk, she swept the *wen* into a heap, afterwards laying hot ashes over it to burn it up. In the morning the ash heap was scattered to the wind. When the dried meat was ready the girl was sent with it to her old home where she presented it to her parents. She then went back to her husband and was allowed to carry out two duties hitherto forbidden her. These were the tending of the fire in her mother-in-law's hut, and the preparation of food for her father-in-law. This indicated that she was at last a full member of her husband's family and so might render services that only a member of the family was allowed to perform.

After the *reyus dipo* she lived in her mother-in-law's hut until her own hut was ready. The framework was built by her husband, and he was expected to thatch the roof himself, but his brothers helped him to prepare the mud for the walls and in building them up. When the hut was finished the girl again visited her parents and brought back with her a ram or a billy goat which was killed to provide a feast to reward the labours of her husband's brothers. Even then, however, the bride might not live independently in her own hut. She was expected to spend the day with her mother-in-law, doing all the laborious parts of the house work and generally holding herself at the beck and call of the older woman. This arrangement normally continued only until the birth of a child, but if the two women got on well together it might endure until a second child was born, when it invariably came to an end. On the other hand if one of the husband's full brothers married the younger woman was immediately relieved of her duties to her mother-in-law by the new bride. Failing both this avenue of escape and the birth of a second child she continued in her mother-in-law's service until her husband would start to take a second wife, when her duties again would devolve upon the new-comer. It is often a cause for wonder to those who are unacquainted with the details of native life and custom, that [illegible] 591 593 591 LDL 595 LDL

595 606 145 461 gamous tribes the women should be contented with a system that deprives them and their children of the exclusive care and attention of the husband and father. But it is easy to see that a young Luo wife might well be glad to share her claims with another in return for a lightening of her domestic burdens. A description of the full nature of these burdens does not lie within the scope of this paper. But I might say here that they are in all cases extremely heavy. There is little doubt that the premature ageing that is such a marked characteristic of the women in all primitive agricultural tribes such as the Luo, is due to the almost unremitting toil incidental to the early years of marriage and child-bearing even where the family circumstances are comparatively prosperous.

(To be continued.)

[the continuation of this article was never published. - Analyst]

10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
FL11 Luo FL11



582
There are no restrictions as to the number of women a man [595] may marry nor as to the number of his wife's sisters whom he may take to wife. Previous to her marriage a young 836 woman may have as many lovers as she wishes, she is only 883 careful to avoid incestuous connections. The unmarried women have their own quarters in a village and the young men theirs, and they seldom have any further intercourse than that of brothers and sisters; the young men, however, from another village pay visits to the young women during the day and make love to them, and in the evening the women return the men's visit and have sexual relations with them, while other young people sing songs of an obscene character and dance outside the house. Such intercourse is not stopped nor discountenanced by the elder people, as it is a recognised custom. Should any children be born from such [848] relations, no punishment ensues nor are the couple blamed. When a father considers his son old enough to marry, he chooses 584 a woman to be his wife. He then takes a cow and a goat to the parents of the young woman and arranges with them the amount to be paid for the marriage-fee. If the parents 585 consent to the match, when an instalment of the fee has been paid, the bride is conducted by her friends to the home of the young man and lives with him as his wife for ten days: during this time there is daily singing and dancing outside the house where the bride and bridegroom reside, and they take part in the dances. At the end of ten days the bridegroom's parents give a feast to all those who have gathered, and after the feast the friends of the bride escort her back to her parents, who in turn give a feast to the people that accompany their daughter. The bride remains with her parents until her husband is able to obtain and pay the full sum asked for as the marriage-fee. During this time, while the bride is waiting for her husband [837] to bring the marriage-fee, there is no obligation upon her to live a chaste life, and she is free to have as many lovers as before. When, however, the fee has been paid and the bride claimed, she ceases to live a loose life and becomes most chaste. The husband builds his house, either in or near his father's 591 village, and his wife is brought thither. When a man marries

10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
FL11 Luo FL11



When A MAN MARRIES

a second or third wife, he may select another place for his new wife, either in the village near his former wife, or he may elect to take her to some other village. A man who has wives dwelling in different places lives with them in turn. Married women are careful in regard to their relations with men. Should a woman be lax in her behaviour or encourage men to visit her, her husband will send her back to her parents and divorce her.

A wife who is proved to be sterile is not divorced, but her parents send her sister to become the man's wife, and he is expected to pay another sum as a marriage-fee for her; but there is no stated time when the sum shall be paid after the woman goes to live with him. The former wife continues to live with him as his wife.

**Distinctive dress of married women.** Each woman after marriage makes a girdle with a long fringe at the back and ties the ends together, which gives it the appearance of a tail. The girdle is worn constantly during the husband's life-time, but, should he die, she takes it off and puts it on the house-roof over the door during the season of mourning to show that she is a widow and is mourning. After marriage a wife scarifies her sides and back in addition to the scarifications she made at puberty. When a woman has a son born, she makes a clay-mound in the middle of the floor in her house for the food pot to rest on when the family are at meals.

**Birth customs.** A wife who expects her confinement calls in an elderly woman to act as midwife. This woman is a person who has had experience in such matters and is herself a mother. When the child is born, the midwife cuts the umbilical cord on an axe handle if the child is a boy, and on a hoe handle if it is a girl. The placenta of a boy is buried outside on the right side of the doorway and that of a girl on the left side. During the first three days the father remains near the house in which his wife and child lie, but the midwife alone enters and attends to the wants of the mother and child. On the third day the father takes a fowl and rubs it on the child's chest and turns it loose, when it becomes the property of the child. When the new moon appears, the parents bathe, and

11: Hartmann M-5 (ca. 1920) 1928 FL11 Luo FL11



# Some Customs of the Luwo (or Nilotic Kavirondo) living in South Kavirondo.

By the Rev. H. HARTMANN.

**Contents:**

Birth. — Betrothal and Marriage. — Burial of a married Man. — Burial of a Woman. — Burial of a Child.

## Birth.

596 The Luwo people live together with their families in kraals. These families consist of the owner of the village with his wives, and his sons with their respective wives and children, and the owner's unmaried daughters.

● 595 Each wife has her own hut. The husband spends most of his time in the hut of his favourite wife. He may, however, have besides a hut for each of his wives, a small hut for himself, but he will never sleep in it. For this purpose he goes to the huts of each of his wives in turn, or generally he sleeps in that of his favourite wife, and visits the others, whenever he is informed by the women [833] that one of them has menstruated, then after 2 days he goes to her hut for a couple of nights.

842 If a woman has conceived and happens to be one who has not brought forth yet, then 3 or 4 months after conception she gets little incisions *(kedo)* made [304] all round the waist. For this operation the patient has to sit down on a stone (nothing else). The operation is performed by an older woman. She uses a crooked thorn which is hooked under the skin, and where the point of the thorn lifts the skin a very tiny cut is made with a native razor. Between every cut there is a space of about $^1/_4$ of an inch. Three rows of incisions are made this way all round the waist just below the navel, the rows being also about $^1/_4$ of an inch apart. No medicine is applied.

When the skin is healed again the woman goes home for 3 days to show herself *(tero kedo)* and a goat is killed for her by her father. She returns with roasted *wimbi* flour for brewing beer and a sheep. When the beer is ready the sheep and some chickens are killed and they have a feast *(kong kelo kedo)*.

After the feast the young woman gets from an older one some medicine, the ashes of burnt herbs, of which she has to taste a little morning and night for one month *(nango misalo)*.

When this month is over she gets another medicine, prepared out of cooked roots of plants *(yath agulu)* which she takes morning and night until one month before giving birth.

[837] In case a woman who is with child has committed adultery she takes a certain medicine, called *manyasi*, otherwise she will have a miscarriage or the child will be a weakling.

844 When the hour of childbirth has come the woman sits down on the floor of the hut naked. Even the usual string of beads is taken from her waist. A

Besides dowry payments the Luo had other means of obtaining cattle before the advent of the Europeans. Two of these ways, which no longer exist, were the capturing of enemies' cattle during inter-tribal wars and robbery during the night. Because there were only few cattle in those days the number of cattle paid for dowries was very limited, not even half of what it is today.

Inheritance and exchange are now the natural means by which the Luo obtain cattle. As mentioned above in discussing dowry the first eight to twelve cattle paid for a dowry, though nominally known as the property of the father of the girl, are in the real sense the inheritance of her full brothers. The father can do anything he likes with them during his life-time, provided he consults the girl's eldest brother. It frequently happens that there is disagreement between the sons and the father, who may try to dispose of these animals without consulting the sons. The other animals belong to certain individuals, e.g., father, uncles and mother. Those of the father if he is a polygamist are inherited by one of his sons who has no sisters. If the father has two or more sisterless sons born of different mothers they inherit equally the special cattle he gets from the dowry of those daughters who have full brothers. These sons also inherit the cattle, goats or sheep that he gets by other means, e.g., those obtained by exchanging millet or maize and those paid to him for the dowries of his nieces. Cattle paid to the mother-in-law by her son-in-law are inherited by her eldest or last son. Usually a father gives more to a son whose mother has died if he is a good son. He calls this son his orphan. If a father loves one of his sons more than the others he may take some of his cattle to one or other of his friends, and tell him that they can only be taken after his death by the loved son.

A man inherits his brother's animals if the brother dies and leaves no son. If a man, having a brother, dies before having children by his wife, and the widow marries someone else of her husband's clan, children born to her by her new husband belong to the brother of her former husband, and so, if they are girls, the brother inherits most of the cattle paid for their dowries. If, however, these girls have a brother, he inherits the cattle.

Some people start to obtain cattle by exchanging their millet or maize for sheep, goats and poultry in the first instance, and when the number of these small stock has increased, they, in turn, are exchanged for cattle. Sometimes a man gives his friend an assurance that if he gives him some goats he will in return give a heifer which can be kept until she calves. After weaning, the calf remains the property of the friend while the cow is returned.

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11



husband and runs away, the amount which he has already paid on her behalf is returned and the marriage is broken off. If a woman finds herself unmarried after a long period, it is customary for her to go to a chief or a rich man and state that she has come to stay and cook for him. In such case she is usually taken to wife, but a very small complimentary present is paid for her. Chiefs may have from ten to forty wives. The Ja-luo are, generally speaking, very moral. They do not intermarry in

436. EMPTYING THE FISH-BASKETS (JA-LUO)

the same clan, but a man may marry the daughter of one who bears the same name as himself.

The Ja-luo believe in a *supreme God* whom they call "Chieng." This, however, is the same name as the sun. When a man comes out of his house in the morning, he spits towards the east, and in the evening he spits towards the west. If the sunset is extremely red, it is said to indicate the approaching death of an important person. They believe that after death the spirits of the departed go up to the sky. If a hailstorm occurs, no one goes to work in the fields on the following day. Shooting stars are said to be a sign of war. They believe that people can be killed by *witchcraft*, and that a wizard has only to show "medicine" to a person

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11

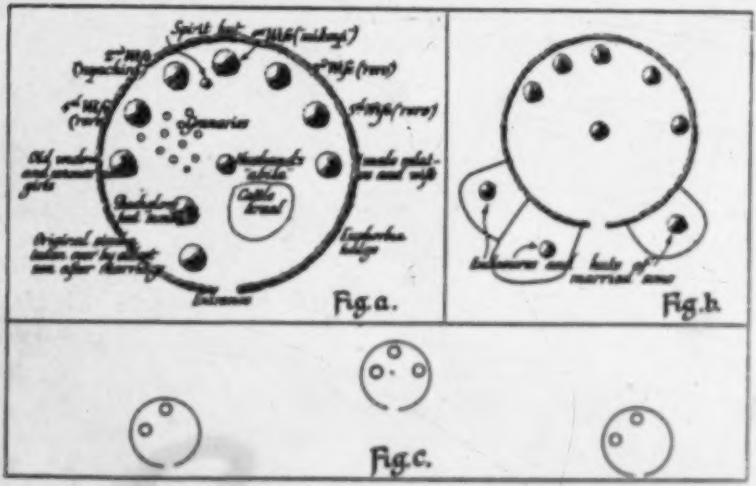


and in a number of other sociological contexts, suggests that its primary meaning is that of owner.[1] The title of the first wife is *mikayi*, that of the second *nyachira*, and of all subsequent wives *rero*.

The diagrams below show the plan of the homestead at typical phases of the family cycle. The fuller details of Fig. *a* are omitted from the other figures. Taking the compound polygynous family as described above as an arbitrary point of departure, the cycle might be charted thus:

PHASE 1. The compound polygynous family of husband, wives, and immature offspring.

2. The eldest son matures, marries, and at first lives with his wife in the original bachelors' hut (*simbi*) while his younger brothers build a new one next to it. (Fig. *a*).




3. The eldest son eventually builds his wife a hut of her own outside his father's homestead hedge. His younger brothers marry and follow suit. Offspring are born to them, bringing into existence the *compound polygynous grand family*. (Fig. *b*.)

4. The sons marry subsidiary wives, gradually splitting off from the original homestead to form separate ones of their own. The head of the original homestead eventually dies, his widows are taken over by their stepsons or brothers-in-law, and the old homestead is in course of time deserted. There is now an extended family, with the eldest or ablest of the dead man's sons as head, the sons' homesteads now each having reached phase 1 of the cycle. (Fig. *c*.)

The head of the compound family is, of course, a member of each of its component elementary families, but the fact that he is common to them all gives each a certain independence in relation to him as well as to one another. The elementary family

[1] It is the possessive form of *nyo* which has the meanings 'owner', 'father', 'grandfather'.

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11



is a most important grouping intermediate between the compound family and its individual members. It is a semi-autonomous domestic unit with its own kitchen economy, its own property rights in cattle, goats, sheep, chickens, land, tools, granaries, and food stocks. Correspondingly it is responsible for its own building and repairs, fuel and water collecting, food provision and allocation from harvest to harvest, and has its own ritual rights and obligations. But the husband is an element common to them all and, having his own rights and duties in respect of these matters, binds them closely together. Livestock are herded co-operatively, not only for all the elementary families of a homestead, but for several homesteads together. The husband is the titular head of a corporate group, not an absolute rightholder.[1] He allocates land, cattle, and other property accruing to the compound family group among its elementary families, and this allocation limits the proportion in which it will eventually be inherited by the sons in each elementary family. He is also able to make levies of property for special purposes from all his elementary families. But in all situations involving social groups wider than the homestead, its head is subject to the decisions of the leader-in-council of the lineage segment to which he belongs. The exclusiveness of elementary families is potentially high, but in practice depends on the skill of the homestead head in securing and maintaining harmony, and on the natural compatibility or otherwise of co-wives. When these factors favour, co-wives may be seen co-operating in many tasks, taking it in turns to supply the husband—or one another's children—with food, combining as a team for garden work, or sharing one another's water-supply. But it cannot be denied that the Luo regard friction between co-wives as being a more normal state of affairs. Behind these situational variations lies the invariable right of the husband to regular cooked food from each wife, of each wife to regular sexual attention from the husband, and the general responsibility of each elementary family for its own self-maintenance granted its rightful assistance from the husband in his proper part of each task.

The rearing of children is woven into this framework. The baby's first contacts are naturally with its mother, who may not finally wean it till it is about two years old, unless as a result of a subsequent pregnancy she has to do so sooner; for suckling a child with a younger sibling in the womb is regarded as robbing and endangering the latter. The baby sleeps in its mother's hut at night and sleeps and later plays near it during the day. It is most closely associated with the other members of its own elementary family, especially the female ones circling round the hearth for the preparation and cooking of food. Other members of the compound family will be hardly less well known from their presence together inside the homestead hedge, but all non-members of the homestead will be comparative strangers except very close relatives or near neighbours who are constant visitors within it.

Babies of either sex are soon each put in the charge of one of the older unmarried girls, probably a real or classificatory sister. This brings them in contact with the world outside the homestead, where a number of these nurse-girls (*Dhodhos japidi*) meet regularly in informal play groups. By the time children can run about on their own they too form play groups, including both girls and boys from several homesteads. Gradually the interests of the two sexes diverge, the boys going off with

[1] The Luo homestead in all phases of its life-cycle would sustain the definition of a corporate group to Weber's sense. See *Theory of Political and Economic Organization*, p. 152.

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11



said that since property has passed to the lineage of a wife it has no claim on her offspring, consequently they take their father's lineage affiliation and can always be claimed by him because they result from his semen.

The Luo conceptualization of primary kinship attitudes is in conformity with the patterns of actual behaviour briefly outlined. The relation of co-wives is visualized as one of jealous rivalry. The term for it in Dholuo is *nyiego* and co-wives refer to one another as *nyieka*.[1] From co-wives themselves this relationship tends to spread to the elementary families of which they are the female heads. Children stick up for their mother's rights over against those of a stepmother. They stand to gain all round from successful competition with the other elementary families of their homestead. This is not of great permanent importance to the daughters, but the sons have everything that is worth while to gain or lose in their rivalry with the groups of their half-brothers. Their inheritance of the most valuable and essential property—livestock and land—depends on the allocation made by their father between the elementary families. But for uterine brothers it also depends on the allocation made between them within their elementary family. Consequently uterine brothers have material reasons for competing with one another, and also for combining together to compete with all other groups of uterine brothers in their compound family, being reinforced in this solidarity by the coincidence of their mother's interests against her co-wives. These pivotal relationships within household and homestead are conceptualized by the Luo as the origin of lineage structure. It might be objected that the orientations noted here are of a kind which naturally tend to be latent in any polygynous family system. The point is, however, that such orientations not only occur in the Luo family but are expected to occur; that the pattern of residence, the kinship terminology, the general conduct of family affairs, and the usual behaviour of its members all reflect this particular alinement rather than any other of a number of alinements possible in polygynous families, and are consciously thought to do so.[2] The main features are represented diagrammatically below (see p. 21).

It is impossible, within the space of this article, to give a full account of marriage types and contracts, the system of inheritance and of succession to property and authority, exogamy, blood-feuds, ancestor worship, and the like. All these matters have a bearing on lineage organization, and I try to give here a brief general account of them, sufficient only to make clear the nature of their connexion with the other material presented.[3]

Exogamy is an attribute of the maximal lineage.[4] This study is mainly concerned

[1] *nyiego* v., to snatch suddenly, or take by surprise; *nyiego* n., the relation of co-wives, jealousy; *nyieka* n., any co-wife, any partner in jealousy.

[2] In fact there are great similarities in this respect with the family structure of the Kikuyu, Kamba, and other East African peoples, but unfortunately the material on them does not tell us to what extent it is reflected in their lineage systems. Compare also Mayer, *op. cit.*, p. 6. The most valuable comparative statement of family structure from this angle is that of Forde, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, *op. cit.* and *The Dynamics of Clanship*, pp. 133-4 note and p. 138.

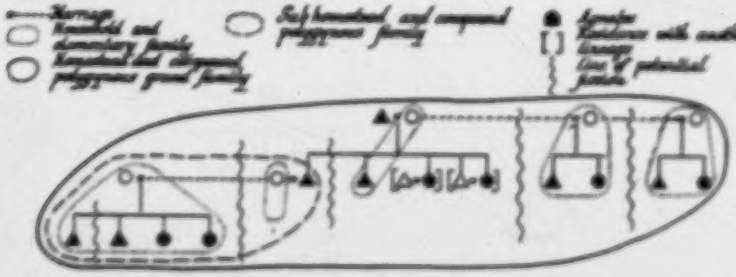
[3] For further details see Paul Mboya, 'Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi' (*East African Standard*, Nairobi), an English translation of which is to be published under the auspices of the East African Literature Bureau. See also Evans-Pritchard, 'Marriage Customs of the Luo of Kenya', *Africa*, vol. III, 1930, p. 132.

[4] A Luo maximal lineage, or the most inclusive agnatic descent group based on an accepted and putatively continuous genealogy, may coincide with 'clan', or it may be a segment within it where clan refers to a group united by a sentiment of common descent without this explicit genealogical basis.

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11



with one maximal lineage, which includes the lineage segments whose territories are marked on the map (Fig. 5) as the locations of Karachuonyo, Kanjpul, Kabooch, Kanyamwa, Karungu, and Kadem.[1] These lineages all claim patrilineal descent by a recognized genealogy from Awandu the wife of Jook, an ancestor from nine to twelve generations of ascent from elders still alive. This is an exceptionally large exogamous group and has no parallel even among the Luo, with their very wide tracing of marriage bars. Its present population is about 120,000, including a small percentage of settlers (*jodak*) from other lineages. The ban on intermarriage is still observed throughout this group except for the *jodak*. Its major segments would



probably have separated from one another completely and ceased to claim effective common descent, if it had not been for the tendency of European administration to crystallize the relations of maximal lineages at about the stage they had reached when outside control was first imposed over half a century ago. Since that time the population of the group has probably doubled to reach its present size. It is regarded by all the Luo as one of the most important and most authentically Luo groups among them. Since, as the map shows, the territories of its major segments are not contiguous, but form three separate blocks, their day-to-day activities have become similarly divided; I deal chiefly with the block formed by the locations of Karachuonyo and Kanjpul, which have a population of 90,000. The lineages of both these locations claim agnatic descent from Rachuonyo, and will be referred to together as Karachuonyo. (They were, in fact, called East and West Karachuonyo by the British administration until recently.) Karachuonyo people can intermarry with the lineages of the surrounding locations—Nyakach, Gem, Kanyada, and Kagan (see map, Fig. 5)—as well as with the groups of *jodak* who have been permitted by them to settle within their territory.[2]

Cases of murder between Karachuonyo and other lineages would—before the British administration—have occasioned blood-feuds between them in which the

[1] Wuoyan is also included, but these people separated from the Luo and were incorporated into the Bantu Kisii.

[2] There are only three considerable groups in Karachuonyo which are not agnatic descendants of Rachuonyo: Kanyadhiang' (1937), Wagwe (1750), and Kanwala (post); see Fig. 1. Traditions account for them as descended either from wanderers who became dependants of Karachuonyo families or from orphan castaways discovered and reared by them. In either case they married Karachuonyo girls, as is almost inevitable in a system of localized exogamous lineages. They therefore rank as sister's son's lineages to Karachuonyo.

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11



less as titular owner of the whole herd. The scheme of division may be represented as in the diagram below. All other livestock is divided in the same way. The eldest son of the first wife must marry before any other sons can do so, and if the first wife has no sons the rest must wait till there is no further chance of her bearing any. When the first wife dies, the second wife becomes chief wife of the homestead, but a first wife's full status can only be succeeded to when she is replaced by a sister and a new homestead is built. The property of a barren wife is inherited by a stepson who is adopted into her household to do the man's work in it.

CATTLE HERD

All herded together

Head of homestead titular owner of all

1. *Cattle of the clan*
Strict property of homestead head.

Used to help sons or brothers' sons to marry, or to marry new wives for homestead head.

Residue ultimately inherited by the youngest son of the homestead, who also takes the father's share of cattle from any subsequent marriages of sisters.

All derived from the heifer and bull taken by the father at every daughter's marriage, and from their increase.

Milk from these used by the homestead head.

*Cattle of the wives' houses*
Share to subsist, assist to quarrel, over among own wives.

2. Cattle entirely property of the wives.

Ultimately inherited by youngest son of each house.

All derived from the heifer called *nak bak* received by the mothers at each daughter's marriage, and from the heifer of *ombo* and bull *ombul* upon a wife by her father at the end of her marriage ceremonies.

3. Cattle held for sons' marriages.

Any residue inherited by youngest son of each house.

All derived from the cattle received as daughters' marriages other than those specified under 1 and 2.

Milk from these used by the wives.

Homestead head has some all discretion in the original division of surviving cattle, and can persuade wives to give up cattle from category 3 to help sequence to marry, and may by agreement take an extra heifer from those received as a daughter's marriage, to complete the bridewealth of one of his other wives.

Succession to authority in the family, and also in the lineage, depends on a combination of these qualifications: primogeniture, personal suitability in character and wealth, and appointment by one's predecessor. Primogeniture is highly regarded and preferred, but is never an absolute rule. Whenever an eldest son is unsuitable, or another agnatic relative is clearly more suitable, the latter is chosen to succeed. But a successor must be named by his predecessor, and as a result of the strong common sentiments in family and lineage segment, the predecessor's appointee seems usually to have been the one whom the elders of the group wish to elect when they meet at the funeral of the predecessor to confirm his choice.

Ancestor worship is falling into disrepute among the Luo of today. All those who go to school become at least nominal Christians, and this affects most of the young, while the old are becoming diffident in the performance of rites which no longer command universal respect. The spirit shrines which used to be placed between the first and second wives' huts are hardly seen today, nor the three stones which used to stand before the spirit shrine, with the stone of sacrifice buried beneath (see

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
FL11 Luo FL11



614 178 very large degree. Their family system remains strong and largely unimpaired by the impact of Western civilization. The patriarch of the extended family unit, the *jokakwero*, remains the local authority. Because a series of family groups together form a territorial unit, the sub-clan, the strength and solidity of the Luo family and lineage structure remain supreme. Obviously there have been changes. Basically, however, the changes are superficial.

562 The role of women in Luo society is a subordinate one. Indigenously they play no part in the major ceremonies or rituals and have never had political authority. They do not organize in age groups or societies as in other cultures, and remain primarily the property of their father and his lineage or, on marriage, the property of their husband and his clan.

●515 Polygyny is still the ideal and goal of the majority of Luo men. A recent village survey showed that taking a sample of 744 homesteads, which varied between a simple monogamous family and the very large unit of the extended polygamous family, 55 per cent were monogamous units, of which 9 per cent had a leviratic wife or wives, thus making them socially polygamous units; 45 per cent were polygamous homesteads, of which 11 per cent had a leviratic wife or wives. Only 27 per cent of the total sample were found to be simple monogamous households, that is one in four of the family type associated with Western culture: a man, his wife and children. The remainder were either polygamous (it had leviratic wives or were of the extended family type. Of this 27 per cent, moreover, it was the ideal of the vast majority to become polygamous later.

871 Education among the Jaluo has increased rapidly in recent years, and it was found in our sample that 63 per cent of the boys of school age were either at school or had been to school for more than one year. The figure was 30 per cent for the girls. Of the adult males, however, only 20 per cent had been to school, and of the married females, only 7 per cent. The standard attained, moreover, was not high. More than half the male

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
FL11 Luo FL11



and the Accused was sentenced to three years' hard labor. The sequel to the case is that the wife was repentant and returned to the village of her husband and was there to welcome him on his return from prison.

Polygamy is the desired goal in marriage in Luo society. The word for co-wife in the Luo language is *nyieko*, which also means jealousy of an intense kind. The jealousy between co-wives occasionally ends in quarrels which result in the murder of one or the other.

## Case No. 5.

A quarrel developed between the senior and most junior wife, whom the latter accused the former of trying to poison her child. Her child was an adopted child, being a child of the deceased second wife of their common husband. When a woman dies, it is customary for the husband to decide which of his wives should act as foster mother to her children. This quarrel began because the senior wife had demanded custody of the child but the husband decided to place the child in the care of the junior wife, who had no sons. The argument went on for years. The child became ill and the junior wife was convinced that he was poisoned by the senior wife. A quarrel developed and the junior wife, who had just returned from the fields with a panga in her hands, struck the senior wife, killing her instantly.

Again the court decided that this was a case of manslaughter, and the accused was sentenced to four years' hard labor.

The Joluo people have a custom at marriages of "pulling the girl" to the village of the groom. Traditionally, the brothers and friends of the girl should resist this "capture." In fact, however, the marriage has been arranged by them and both parties are fully aware that this is a mock battle. On occasions these fights become a spirited and serious "free for all." From time to time, therefore, one or more of the party is seriously

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
FL11 Luo FL11



762. 159 584 The parents insisted that she be sent or "dragged" to her husband. On the night of the ceremonial defloration she committed suicide by hanging. This act is said to have brought a curse, not only to the prospective groom's homestead, but also on her own minimal lineage. Her mother was so struck by grief that she committed suicide later. The mother's case will be discussed below as case number 21.

The next two cases are those where foul play was suspected.

## Suicide Case No. 14.

762. 159 578 A woman was found hanging by a rope at night by her husband. He dug her grave and had buried her in the morning. In evidence given at the preliminary inquiry witnesses testified to the fact that she and her husband quarrelled some hours before her death, as the result of a beer party, and that she had left early for her own village. The body showed signs of having been beaten, but her husband argued that he had beaten her after she had hanged herself, as is the custom of the Jokun.

The case was not tried for lack of evidence, and the husband's family believed that she did in fact commit suicide, whereas her family believed that she was murdered.

603 It is significant that the husband did not claim the return of bride-wealth, as he would likely have done had it been a clear case of suicide. Neither did her family offer to repay the bride-wealth, or to give another girl in lieu of bride-wealth, as they might have done had the husband been clear of blame.

## Suicide Case No. 15.

762. 159 585 A woman had quarrelled with her husband because she alleged that he would not give her her proper share of sexual pleasure. The argument involved other wives and they told this woman that her husband hated her and that she would be better dead. The next morning she was found on her bed, having been killed by a knife or having inflicted a fatal wound on herself with a knife.

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
FL11 Luo FL11

*Homicide and Suicide among the Joluo of Kenya*

As in the previous case, the woman's family believed that she was murdered and the man's family believed that she committed suicide. It is difficult to say which version is true. It is extremely unusual, however, for a woman to kill herself with a knife, and I have not recorded another case. There was one case among the men, Number 6, but this was a modern "intellectual," who lived in a Council house with a plastered ceiling, which was hardly suitable for hanging in the traditional way. 762. 159

The next case is the one mentioned earlier involving a woman's fear of the consequences of her son's behavior.

## Suicide Case No. 16.

The woman in this case was the wife of a squatter who was a servant to an important Chief. The Chief helped him to get married to this woman, a local girl who was in fact related in some way to the Chief. After his establishment as an affine of the Chief, the *jodak* became very wealthy and built his own village on a place allocated by the Chief. He married a second wife after the building of his village and, just before the case we are discussing, married a third wife. The first wife had many children, most of whom were daughters. At the time of her suicide, all but one had married and her house was very wealthy. The houses of the other two wives were therefore extremely jealous. 762. 159 915

One day during the short rainy season, the owner of the village, the husband, wished to make a present of *aim-aim* to his Chief and benefactor in order that he might pay the tax which at that time was calculated on the number of wives and also to pay the traditional tribute to the Chief. The woman's son at about that time invited a large number of guests to his village and demanded that his mother give him *aim-aim* with which to entertain them. She refused because she knew her husband intended to use the entire crop. The son disobeyed [651]

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
FL11 Loo FL11



his mother and took the sin-sin by stealth. When the husband came to collect it for the Chief, he found that a large portion of it had disappeared. This caused a bitter quarrel between him and the boy's mother.

In fear of the consequences of what her son had done, the woman placed a rope, which was used for tying up one of her cows for milking, in a small basket and went out of the village as if to collect vegetables. She went to one of the largest trees in a nearby valley which was hidden from sight by thick bush and there hanged herself. My informant then described the scene as follows: "The first person who found the body cursed it very hard and, after having cut the rope, started mourning. The place was soon filled with people and some were asked to bring hoes, axes, and pangas to destroy the tree. There and then people of the village and her lineage started their work and within a day the tree was completely destroyed and all the roots dug up from the ground and burned."

"When I asked why the tree was being destroyed," the informant went on, "the elders told me that it was being done to stop more people from hanging from it, for we Loo believe that hanging is inherited by different people in different clans. If a clan had not had a person hang himself before, it is difficult for one in that clan to hang himself or herself. If a tree on which someone had hanged himself was allowed to remain, it would drag other people to it for the same purpose."

The next case involves a curse as well as domestic trouble.

## Suicide Case No. 17.

The husband of this suicide had been having considerable trouble with his cattle and many were dying from disease. The beginning of the illness coincided with the elopement of her daughter with a young man who had neither paid little-wealth nor seemed likely to pay it. Her husband blamed his misfortunes on this incident and his suspicions were confirmed by

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
FL11 Luo FL11



the local prophet (*jabilo*). When he returned to the village from his visit to the *jabilo*, he cursed his wife as follows: "I wish the disease which killed my brothers would kill you, my wife, for your daughter is a whore who has brought the disease of her womb to my cattle." From the evidence, the woman seemed to have planned her death carefully. She made her daughters swear that they would not be married to anyone who would ever give her husband cattle. She distributed all of her belongings to them and placed a curse on the village to the effect that her husband should never be able to marry another wife. She then entered her house and hanged herself.

Since that time, the Luo pointed out, his daughters have all eloped with persons who have not paid bride-wealth and no other woman has ever consented to marry him or to live with him.

The next case is typical of many which involve jealousy at the taking of a second wife, especially without the first wife's permission, or as in this case, expressly against her wishes. My informant was living near the village when the suicide took place and his mother became involved in it. The story was told to me in his mother's presence and she helped with the details.

## Suicide Case No. 18.

A man, Okech, who was happily married, invited his wife's sister, Apido, to come to live at his homestead to act as a nurse-maid for their first child.*

* This is a common practice among the Joluo and often the "nurse" (*apidi*) is later married by her brother-in-law, especially if the sister remarries and agrees to be happy together. Frequently the *apidi* will form a strong attachment to her brother-in-law, and marriage becomes desirable or even necessary. If a man marries a *apidi*, she becomes known as *ngat dhako*, the wife of the same blood, and the children of both wives share the same hut and trace descent through the elder sister. The term *dhako* is also used to describe a girl given to replace a sister who was unable to bear her husband a son; it therefore does have a slight connotation of stigma.

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
FL11 Luo FL11

*African Homicide and Suicide*

159 Okech decided to marry the servant-maid but his wife adamantly refused to agree. Okech beat her severely and she ran home to her parents where she remained for several weeks. Her sister, Apolo, continued to live in the village and by now cohabited openly with the husband as if they were man and wife. The wife eventually returned and made an effort to accept the situation as it existed. The husband built Apolo her own house as the second wife (*nyachieu*) in the customary place in the homestead, but had not paid bride-wealth. In fact, he had not completed (*nie*) bride-wealth of the first wife, which added tension to the situation.

All appeared to go well until one night Okech returned from a beer party and abused his wife. What was more serious, he went to the hut of Apolo to sleep although it was the customary period of the month when he should have gone to the house of his first wife.

Early the next morning, the wife visited the mother of my informant and insisted that she accept as a gift her cooking pot and other household utensils. Her excuse was that she had bought new ones. She returned to her house where she packed the utensils and sent Apolo to carry them to my friend's mother. Meanwhile, Okech was sleeping.

She then hanged herself from a rafter in her hut. The noise of her strangulation awakened Okech, who cut the rope and made frantic efforts to revive her with water and to cure the body in the customary Luo manner. His wailing brought his brothers and relatives from their homesteads nearby.

When Apolo returned she was confronted by the irate brothers of Okech who accused her of being a witch who had brought *chira* to the village and to the lineage. They beat both Okech and Apolo and drove them from the homestead. The hut in which the woman had hanged herself was then immediately destroyed.

Apolo was not allowed to enter the homestead of her father who, with his sons, drove her from the clan area by thrashing

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
FL11 Luo FL11



762
159
595

her with canes. She never returned to the district. In time Okech was forgiven and returned to his homestead. He never remarried, but now lives with two leviratic wives.

## Suicide Case No. 19.

762
159
556
595

This suicide was the junior wife of a very wealthy man. Although he was wealthy, he did not provide the modern luxuries for his wives which are now becoming customary and which carry high status among women. This woman decided that she would take matters into her own hands and killed a goat belonging to herself in order to sell the meat at the market to get money and millet, so that she could get the things that she desired. When her co-wives saw what she had done, they took part of the millet and some of the money. The woman appealed to her husband, but he sided with his other wives. That evening she went into the bush near the village and hanged herself.

## Suicide Case No. 20.

762
159
595
[855]

This woman was the second wife (*nyachieu*) of a wealthy man who preferred his first and third wives to her. This preferential treatment gave them courage to abuse her often and to show her that they were the only wives of the husband. On one occasion, when she was quarrelling with the husband, the other two wives joined in and beat her and abused her. The husband looked on in amusement. Shortly after, he took hold of her son and began to curse him, saying that he was as bad as his mother. His mother tried to interfere, but was prevented from doing so by her co-wives, who continued to beat her. As soon as it got dark that night, she disappeared. Her son had run away to her mother's home. The people from the village and her relatives searched for her for three days, and at the end of the third day, her people began to mourn as if she were dead. The head of a [redacted] buried in front of her house to represent her body, for [redacted] certain that she was dead and her body devoured by wild animals.

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



853 when a mother is eating she will hear her child cry out
[854] for some of her food.

From six to nine months, gruel continues to be the staple article of diet. In certain strict families adult food is not given until the child is over a year old. Babies fed on cow's milk begin using adult food during the first or second month.

*Restrictions on the suckling of babies.* It is considered a
[784] breach of taboo for a nursing mother to suckle her
[761] neighbour's child. This restriction is based on the fear that some woman with poor milk may, in suckling a
[177] baby, kill it. One of my informants pointed out that in the early days of missionary work an attempt to break this taboo had failed. She said that many of the children thus suckled had died, and the attempt had been aban-
[603] doned. One exception to the restriction, however, is that of a mother-in-law. In cases of necessity she is permitted to suckle her daughter-in-law's child because it is assumed that her milk has stood the test.

853 In rare instances there seems to be different treatment
● 595 of male and female children in a polygamous home with regard to suckling. Some of my informants stated that inter-suckling is permitted if all the nursing mothers have female babies.

[587] Nevertheless, the taboo against inter-suckling of male babies is reinforced by the fact that it is possible for a son to marry one of his father's younger wives. Hence a woman refuses to suckle a child who might become her husband on the death of the father.

853 The social restriction with regard to the suckling of
[177] infants is still observed with rigidity, and there are no evidences of a change even under the impact of modern ideas.

*Methods of feeding.* No force is used in feeding young babies. A little gruel in a small container is put to the

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



raised against such raiders. It is considered a disgrace to be discovered as an accomplice in raids on the girls' sleeping quarters.

### On attaining Maturity

The attainment of maturity among girls is marked by the first onset of menstruation. In the past this was kept very secret until several periods had been experienced, and even now its first occurrence is kept secret. Formerly, early preparations were made for it by instructing the girls about the physical changes involved.

The information regarding this important physiological happening used to be given by the old woman in whose hut the girls slept. At present the information is obtained largely from experienced women with whom the girls associate. In the past there was no initiation ceremony to celebrate the event, and today the position remains the same. Although the betrothal of a girl could take place as early as ten, the social attitude was and still is that girls should not be handed over to their husbands before attaining maturity. Even when the mutual handing over took place before this age, the girl was obliged to live in the home of some older woman until the advent of menstruation. It is still believed that premature marriage results in great weakness to the girl.

*The social position of a girl on reaching maturity.* The social position of the newly-mature girl is vague and uncertain. Any abnormality of mind, character or body, is a source of anxiety to her family. Moreover, as most girls marry between sixteen and eighteen, there is a tendency for ill-wishers to over-state the ages of girls above that limit, because the attitude of society towards them is similar to that adopted towards overdue goods. Those who fail to marry at an early age thus become subjects of scorn. So strong is the pressure exerted by

20:Orninde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



this attitude that unmarried girls, as they grow older, are often forced to marry in the end by taking advantage of the institution of polygamy, which acts as a final method of absorption. Although she may live to an advanced age, a single girl is continually tormented by the fact that society does not approve of unmarried girls.

*Restrictions.* Traditionally, a mature girl is not allowed to enter her father's or her mother's sleeping place, especially if the mother is still giving birth to children. This restriction, although generally ignored by Christians, applies also to the wives of her uncles. Those who are her parents or parents by marriage do not go where a girl receives her male visitors. By custom this hut was built beyond view of the parents' huts and served as a sleeping place for boys. It is considered that a girl who has commenced associating with men should not enter her mother's or father's hut because she would interfere with their powers of reproduction.

*Relationship with brothers.* The fear of incest has led to the practice of keeping young women's activities as separate as possible from those of their brothers, but free association and conversation concerning their mutual interests generally takes place, since brothers and sisters retain an interest in each others' love affairs. From his sisters, a young man may be informed of things he wishes to know about his girl friend.

*Pre-marital pregnancy.* Cases of pre-marital pregnancy were very rare in the past, according to most of my informants. But this rarity was not due to the fact that sexual relationships were prohibited. Pregnancy among mature girls was apparently not infrequent from any strict moral code, but from the conscious effort of the girls themselves to guard against it. Because much importance was attached to virginity, it was a matter of personal pride and was carefully guarded. It was a great honour and a

20:Orninde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



source of much social rejoicing to discover that a married woman had been found to be a virgin. Such a bride was given a high prestige among the other women.

In the past, if a woman gave birth to an illegitimate child, her only chance of marriage was to an old man with a number of wives. There was no possibility of occupying the position of chief wife of the family; and the heads of cattle paid were much fewer. The child was taken by the man who legally married her, but she was not allowed to give birth in her own home. Everything was done to get rid of her as soon as possible.

Examples of such pregnancies are very common at present. But although social disapproval is still keenly felt, modern conditions have become more favourable to women in this situation, and an increasing number of them are being married to bachelors. Unlike some communities, no death punishment was ever given. If the occurrence takes place between close relatives the matter is kept secret; in the past, however, the couple could be exiled.

### Modern Education and Adolescent Girls

Progress in the education of adolescent girls is hampered because the Luo people do not appreciate its suitability to the environment of their women. To the majority, modern education is associated with clerical work and the many other jobs that *men* take up after a school career. The position of girls in this scheme is not clearly envisaged.

The social importance attached to marriage is having to adapt itself to a prolonged school career and the raised age for marriage which this implies. An inability to appreciate schooling for girls is also based on a high esteem for the traditional education which it tends to interrupt and weaken.

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



Although a larger number of males would normally be preferred, a family of exclusively male children is regarded as a disadvantage because of the economic burden incurred when the sons want to marry. But when a father has only female children, his position is considered as 'dead', for a family is only considered as living when there are male members to perpetuate the line.

858 142

## The Social Environment

*Lineage.* Social relationship among the Luo is determined by the strict manner in which their society is organised. Since the social structure follows a system of lineage (*dhoot*, pl., *dhoot*, sing.), the exogamous limits or the limits within which intermarriage may not take place, depend on the relationship between these lineages. When relationships are close, the lineages unite through their dead originators until a common ancestor is reached. The lineages continue to grow, thus stretching the distance of relationship further and further. The breaking of the rule against intermarriage depends on the attitude of the living members of the lineages and the distance between them and their ancestors.

613 582

In addition to the regulation of matrimonial relationships, the structure of the society also determines ritual observances and funeral ceremonies among the Luo. While the relationship between the different lineages is characterised by competition, which is often a feature of polygamous homes.

613 595

*Family relationships.* The difference between monogamous and polygamous homes is found not only in the status of the women, but also in the psychological attitude towards the parents resulting from the husband and wife relationship. Although it is generally assumed that the focus of family life is the father, the degree of

595 594

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



595 initiative and freedom among women is greater in polygamous families than in monogamous ones. In the latter there is a greater dependence on the father, whereas the father of a polygamous household is relatively free from the many responsibilities imposed upon the heads of monogamous families.

The wife of a monogamist usually has a greater share of her husband's wealth than the wife of a polygamist. In families where there are many wives, the relationship between a husband and any one of his wives depends on the personal attention that he receives. Often the provision of food is a very important factor, because there is a natural tendency to discriminate against those wives who do not give enough of their food to the husband. The polygamous father demands obedience from both his children and his wives but in the main he leaves the women to support themselves.

In this way a sort of individuality develops among the different houses of the one family. In the upbringing of her children each mother aims at instilling a competitive spirit between her children and those of the other houses. Hence contact between the father and his children is rather lessened, while his detached position increases the children's fear of him. The father's personal assistance goes largely to the youngest wife, from whom he gets most of his personal attention, but he normally continues to respect the position of his chief wife.

In the monogamous family the economic fluctuation in the fortune of the father has results which are felt throughout the family, and here, too, there are instances where the family is supported by the mother. In both types of family, however, the disciplinary action of the father is more authoritative than that of the mother, though the children may naturally prefer the parent who is more lenient and sympathetic.

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



The strongest tie of relationship exists between the children of one mother. This close relationship extends to the maternal as well as the paternal grandparents. Children may be taken to the maternal relatives while they are still young, or they may sometimes go for visits when they are a little older. Although they share the same father, the relationship of the children with those of the other houses is much less close, because the mother in each house thinks first of the future of her own children. For this reason the undue wealth of any one particular house is viewed with alarm in the other houses and a mother will maintain a constant watch on the other sections of the family lest their successes should overshadow her own children. 595 603

When a child goes to stay with its maternal grandparents it is often spoilt by their too readily shown affection and their unwillingness to teach it discipline. Hence parents complain that children who spend most of their time with their maternal relatives are unruly and difficult to manage when they return to their homes. 603 855